BOLD: Unleash Your Faith - Part 1

# The Lord Is My Deliverer

# (Matthew 17:14-20)

Welcome to Christ’s Community Church. This morning, we’re starting a brand-new message series called, “Bold: Unleash Your Faith”, and what we’re going to talk about for the next four weeks is miracles. Now, I’ve got to qualify that, because in our culture today the word miracle has lost a lot of its power. You know, when you’re going shopping and the parking lot’s full, but as you pull around in front of Walmart, Lowe’s, or wherever it is you might be going, there’s a parking spot right in the front, and we say it’s a what? It’s a miracle, right?

But it’s not a miracle! You see, a miracle is when our all-powerful, all-knowing, ever present God intervenes in our lives on earth. A miracle is a surprising, even shocking, supernatural event that’s not explainable by natural or scientific laws and is therefore considered to be the work of God. This is the kind of God that we believe in, a miracle working God, and so for the next few weeks were going to talk about different types of miracles. We’re going to talk about the miracle of provision, the miracle of protection, the miracle of physical healing, and today the miracle of deliverance. This is when God performs a miracle against the forces of darkness; releasing the captives, rescuing those who’ve been in bondage, and liberating those who’ve been enslaved. And so, today’s message is entitled, “The Lord is my Deliverer.”

Now, some of you look confused already and maybe you don’t think you’ve ever been captive to anything, you’ve never been in bondage, you’ve never been enslaved, and you’re not even sure if you believe in demons or whatever the forces of darkness are. And so, right now, maybe you’re wavering between thoughts of Harry Potter and Star Wars, wondering what all this is talk of forces of darkness is about; and that’s because one of the greatest tricks of our spiritual enemy, the devil has ever played, was to convince the world that he doesn’t exist and that he’s nothing more than a caricature of this red guy with hooves, horns and a pitchfork.

This week is a perfect example as our community comes out in hordes, taking to the streets, making a mockery of everything evil. And so, it’s easy for us to fall into the same trap as we’re walking down the street, raking leaves, or sitting on the porch embracing the fall weather with the crispness of the air and maybe even the smell of smoke from someone’s fireplace down the street. As we consider the dark world and the spiritual forces of evil this morning, for you it may seem so remote, and I admit it’s so far from where I was as I was thinking about this this week. You know, I was sitting in my office hearing the sound of children playing on the playground, looking at a Norman Rockwell painting on the wall above my computer and everything was so peaceful. And it’s at times like that that makes it difficult to grasp the reality that there is a spiritual battle going on around us, that we’re living in a war zone, but the Bible tells us we are, and even as I’m reflecting on this, I’m very well aware that in my subconscious mind, my thoughts, desires, ambitions, and goals are in the midst of a fierce battle. In fact, from the moment I wake up each morning until my head hits the pillow at night I’m engaged in spiritual combat, a struggle, a war not easily won, a battle that threatens my faith, my testimony, and my effectiveness for the kingdom of God. But it’s not just me, it’s the same for you, if you’re a follower of Christ, you have a very real adversary.

This was something that David in the Old Testament knew very well. He knew this in both a spiritual and a physical sense, but listen to what he proclaimed so boldly, hear his praise,

“O Sovereign Lord, my strong deliverer who shields my head in the day of battle” (Psalms 140:7).

And David told Goliath, that giant Philistine, "You come against me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel whom you’ve defied. This day, the Lord will hand you over to me, I'll strike you down, and the whole world will know that there’s a strong deliverer, a God in Israel.”

Today, we need to be aware that our spiritual enemy has engaged us in a very real battle, we’re living in a war zone, our lives are a battlefield, and every moment of every day there are things happening around us that cannot be seen with the natural eye but are nonetheless very real. Now I’m not talking hocus-pocus, Halloween, ghosts and goblins, and all that kind of stuff; but I’m talking about what the Bible refers to as spiritual warfare. The apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians chapter 6, verse 12,

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12).

And so, God wants us to know that in spite of all the good things that he’s given us, in spite of what we see around us, that the natural world that we see is not all there is, but there’s also a spiritual world surrounding us. Paul tells us very clearly that the world isn’t a playground, but the world’s a battleground, and we’re doing battle against the spiritual forces of evil. And so, number one, we need to be aware of our adversary, aware of his schemes, because we certainly don’t want to be blindsided.

## 1. Our Adversary

But we also need to be confident, knowing that we have a deliverer, and being very much aware that Jesus Christ is far superior to every spiritual being that exists; that his name is above every name. This is what the Bible tells us in Colossians chapter 1, the apostle Paul says Jesus… “is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy” (Colossians 1:15-18).

And therefore, it’s for that reason that we can be bold, unleashing our faith, but we don’t want to be stupid, we need to be aware of our adversary. And so, I want to give you a little background about the forces of darkness, that which is called here, thrones, powers, rulers, and authorities. That which is commonly referred to as demons because many people mistakenly think that demons are the spirit of the dead. When the reality is that these are ranks of demons, they take any form that they want or are assigned, and they inhabit the abode of the dead. And so, the Bible gives us insight into this dark world and our adversary.

Most Bible scholars are quick to acknowledge the reference to one who is called “morning star” in Isaiah chapter 14, which within its context is a prophecy where he is telling the people of God who’ve been taken into captivity by the King of Babylon that deliverance is coming, that the Lord is going to give them relief from suffering, turmoil, and bondage. And so, the picture that Isaiah describes is of this mighty ruler whose great pride has brought him to destruction. He describes the king’s arrival in the world of the dead, with all of his wealth, glory, and power being snatched away from him. But Isaiah saw something even deeper than the destruction of this kingdom, by the revelation of the Holy Spirit, he saw the fall of this king of Babylon as being similar to the defeat of Satan, and he saw a vision of the prince of this world, Lucifer, the morning star, who in the same way as the king of Babylon had influenced the nations to act contrary to the will of God. And so, here Isaiah addresses the devil, here called “morning star” which in Latin is the name Lucifer, saying in verse 12,

“How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You’ve been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit” (Isaiah 14:12-15).

In this passage, five times Lucifer claims that he will be like God, but God says that there’s no one like him, no one comparable, and that he won’t share his glory; and so God casts Lucifer out of heaven, and Lucifer takes with him one third of the angels according to Revelation chapter 12. Most Bible scholars agree that the demons are these fallen angels that were cast out of heaven with Lucifer. And so, Lucifer is Satan, he’s our adversary, he’s very powerful, but there are also many demons, fallen angels, and what an angel is to God, a demon is to the devil. These demons serve Satan, they obey our adversary Lucifer, and they do everything they can to steal people away from the kingdom of God. And they do that, number two, by their evil influence. And so, I want to show you something in the New Testament which adds to Isaiah’s prophecy.

## 2. Evil Influence

In Revelation chapter 12, John shares with us a vision, intermingling past, present, and future happenings. In this vision John tells us of two signs, the first is of a woman who is symbolic of the nation of Israel who is about to give birth. We see this in verse one,

“A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth” (Revelation 12:1-2).

To a son who is identified as Jesus Christ. This is our Savior, the Messiah, who would live 33 short years, before being murdered and caught up to the throne of God. In verse three, John tells us another sign appeared in heaven,

“An enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born. She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne” (Revelation 12:3-5).

This red dragon is the second wondrous sign, this is Satan and the stars are that one third of the angels who are flung to the earth. And so, they’re already here. They were here in the beginning, they were here in the garden when Adam and Eve sinned, and they were here in Bethlehem attempting to devour the Christ child, the son of God, the moment he was born. And it was this sweeping out of heaven, this flinging to earth, that was the event of which Jesus said,

"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18).

And so, Jesus said, “I was there in heaven, I saw it, I was a spectator of this great event.” Now, as far as the exact timing of these things, I would suggest that this sweeping of the stars out of the sky was likely even before creation or at least some time before the Great Flood. Because the Bible says even “Christ was chosen before the creation of the world” (1 Peter 1:20). And that even, “God chose us in (Christ) before the creation of the world…” (Ephesians 1:4). And so, all of this is possibly happening before the Dawn of time, and then in verse seven, John jumps ahead sometime into the future and he tells us,

“There was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down — that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him” (Revelation 12:7-9).

And so, Satan and the demons had been swept out of heaven, they attempted to devour the Christ child on earth when he was born, and then sometime in the future, sometime after the rapture of the church and during the tribulation, they’ll return to heaven to wage war with God. But this time they’ll be hurled down, this is stronger language here, and they’ll be bound for the duration of the millennial kingdom, because it’s not until chapter 20 when Satan and his demons, the beast and the false prophet, are consigned to everlasting punishment in the lake of fire. And yet today, the demonic forces of darkness are active evil influences in our lives, in our community, and in the world. It’s for that reason that the apostle Paul warns us saying that the Holy Spirit “clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons” (1 Timothy 4:1).

And so, our adversary is very real, and the evil influence of these deceiving spirits is very powerful as they tempt you to sin, wanting to blame you and accuse you when you do; but we serve a miracle working God, a great deliverer, and yet so many times it’s difficult for us to remember because we’re just trying to get through the day. You know, we’ve got bills to pay, dishes that need to be done, we’re trying to make it to work on time, and trying to maintain our sanity with the kids when we often feel like we’re being held hostage in our own homes. And so, we’re just trying to get through the day, not recognizing the spiritual battle we’re facing, and the lengths with which the enemy will go to distract you from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. Now, I know that’s a lot to think about, but I tell you these things so that you’ll recognize our adversary, you’ll identify the evil influence in your lives, but even more so, number three, that we understand how Christ has given us authority over the powers of darkness.

## 3. Christ’s Authority

There’s a really sad story recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke about a father whose son is physically afflicted by a demon. This happens just after Peter, James, and John came down from the mountain where Jesus was transfigured before them. They saw him in all the glory of heaven, shining like the sun, and now in Matthew chapter 17 as they come down from the mountain of glory, Jesus and the three disciples came upon a crowd, and verse 14 says,

“A man approached Jesus and knelt before him pleading, "Lord, have mercy on my son, he has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. I brought him to your disciples, but they couldn’t heal him" (Matthew 17:14-16).

Jesus response was one of grief as he looked upon the scene, considering the distraught father, the embarrassed disciples, the accusations of the scribes, and the young boy on the ground in convulsions, rolling around, and foaming at the mouth. You can almost imagine the pain and emotion with which Jesus groans from deep inside as he said,

"O unbelieving and perverse generation, how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me." Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed from that moment” (Matthew 17:17-18).

Mark gives us greater detail in chapter 9, verse 26,

“The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, "He's dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up” (Mark 9:26-27).

The demon was inflicting much suffering on the boy, even mocking the disciples, but at the word of Jesus, in just a split-second, miraculously the boy was delivered from his suffering. You see, Jesus came to destroy the works of darkness, he came so that we could have life and have it to the full. But on the other side, the prince of darkness and his demons want to steal, kill, and destroy. They want to cause pain, influence depression, suicidal thoughts, and feelings of desperation. They want to destroy everything that is of value to you and to the kingdom of God. And it’s not a game, it’s not a little red guy with horns and pitchfork; this is a powerful adversary whose sole mission is to hurt whatever matters to the heart of God. And nothing matters more to God than you. And so, what should we do? Should we be afraid? No, we need to unleash our faith. Look with me at verse 19, the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked,

“Why couldn't we drive it out?" Jesus replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you" (Matthew 17:19-20).

For those of you that are in Christ, “Nothing will be impossible for you”. For those of you who’ve been transformed by the grace of God, you’ve been filled with the Holy Spirit, you need to understand that you have authority over darkness in Jesus name. It’s not that we’re fighting with our power, but we need to understand that we’re standing with the armor of God and fighting with the power of Christ.

In Matthew chapter 10, Jesus called his disciples to himself and he gave them “authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness” (Matthew 10:1). Then he commanded them to go saying, “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8).

He said, “Go, be bold, nothing will be impossible for you, unleash your faith.” You see, Jesus gave them authority to use his power, and so, as Spirit filled, born again believers in Jesus Christ, we have the authority to declare the name that is above every name, the name of Jesus over all darkness. If you’re in Christ, you have authority in Jesus name. And so, where there is spiritual darkness, you can walk with confidence, you can be bold and unleash your faith in the name and the authority of Jesus Christ. You can take authority over the spiritual forces of darkness. Jesus said,

“I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." (Matthew 17:20).

And so, Jesus says, “You take authority, you speak to it, you say to that mountain, that difficulty, that obstacle, and you call upon my name and the supernatural power of God. You unleash your faith, because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.”

You see, our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. And so, we’re going to stand in the name and the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, we’re going to put on the full armor of God, with the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, having our feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace, taking up the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit. Praying in the Spirit always so that you may be able to stand your ground in Jesus name.

Today, you and I need to recognize that we’re not fighting for victory, but we’re fighting from victory. If you are in Christ, you have authority over darkness in the name of Jesus.

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